

WE CLAIM:

1. A coupon distribution system comprising:

one or more consumer units operated by a consumer, each comprising a display monitor, a memory for storing data to be displayed on the display monitor, a data processing unit connected to the display monitor and the memory and having communication means connectable over a communication medium to at least a coupon server, and a user input device to permit a consumer to make one or more selections from choices displayed on the display monitor; and

a coupon server located remotely from the one or more consumer units and comprising a memory for storing first data corresponding to one or more participating retail outlets, the first data including data for identifying each of the retail outlets by name and inventory of goods offered for sale, and second data containing coupon data used for generating electronic discount coupons for selected goods, and a data processing unit having communication means connectable over the communication medium to the at least one consumer unit, first means responsive to a connection with a consumer unit to transmit for display on the display monitor of the consumer unit a first file containing a list of participating retail outlets which may be individually selected by the consumer using the user input device, second means responsive to the selection of a retail outlet by the consumer to transmit to the consumer unit a second file containing first data corresponding to the selected retail outlet

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for display on the display monitor of the consumer unit, the second file containing the identity of goods offered for sale by the selected retail outlet, and the displayed goods being individually selectable by the consumer using the user input device, and third means responsive to the selection of one or more items of goods by the consumer to transmit a third file for display on the display monitor of the consumer unit containing second data corresponding to the selected goods, the third file containing electronic coupons corresponding to one or more of the selected goods.

2. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1; wherein the first means of the coupon server comprises means for acquiring identifying indicia for identifying the geographical location of a consumer unit connected thereto, selecting one or more participating retail outlets in the vicinity of the consumer unit, and downloading for display on the display monitor of the consumer unit the first file containing a list of the selected retail outlets.

3. A coupon distribution system according to claim 2; wherein the communication medium comprises a public telephone network, and the means for acquiring identifying indicia comprises means for acquiring Caller ID data to identify the geographical location of the consumer unit.

4. A coupon distribution system according to claim 2; wherein the means for acquiring identifying indicia comprises means for transmitting a file to the consumer unit containing a form requesting the consumer to identify the geographical location of the consumer unit.

5. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1; further comprising a hardcopy apparatus for producing a hardcopy of electronic coupons transmitted to the consumer unit.

6. A coupon distribution system according to claim 5; wherein the hardcopy apparatus comprises a printer connected to a consumer unit.

7. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1; further comprising a point-of-sale unit located in a participating retail outlet and comprising a display monitor, a memory for storing data to be displayed on the display monitor, a data processing unit connected to the display monitor and the memory and having communication means connectable over a communication medium to the coupon server, a user input device to permit a consumer to make one or more selections from choices displayed on the display monitor, and a hardcopy apparatus for producing a hardcopy of electronic coupons.

SUB 67 8. A coupon distribution system according to claim 7; wherein the coupon server is located remotely from the point-of-sale unit, and further comprises fourth means for transmitting to

the point-of-sale unit a fourth file containing the identity of goods offered for sale by the retail outlet at which the point-of-sale unit is located, the goods being individually selectable by the consumer using the user input device; wherein the third means of the coupon server is responsive to the selection of one or more items of goods by the consumer to transmit the third file for display on the display monitor of the point-of-sale unit containing second data corresponding to the selected goods, the third file containing electronic coupons corresponding to one or more of the selected goods.

9. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1; wherein the first data corresponding to the plurality of participating retail outlets stored in the memory of the coupon server further comprises data representative of the physical layout of the participating retail outlets indicating the location of the goods offered for sale.

10. A coupon distribution system according to claim 9; wherein the coupon server further comprises fifth means responsive to the selection of one or more items of goods by the consumer to transmit a fifth file for display on the display monitor of the consumer unit containing data identifying the location in the selected retail outlet of the goods selected by the consumer.

11. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1;
wherein the second file contains graphical data for displaying a
representation of the physical layout of the goods in the
selected retail outlet.

12. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1;
wherein the one or more consumer units comprise client computers
on a network.

13. A coupon distribution system according to claim 1;
wherein the coupon server comprises an Internet host computer.

Add A3

ADD B4

Add C1